



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

Remove or "Take" Nuisance Animals Legally

Identify If You Need a Permit or License

This page is intended to help you identify whether a permit is required to legally "take" an animal that is causing a nuisance, damaging your property or threatening your safety. "Take" or "taking" means to pursue, shoot, hunt, kill, capture, trap, snare or net wildlife and game; or perform acts that disturb or worry wildlife. Taking an animal is only suggested if other [best practices](#) do not help alleviate the problem.

Taking During Recreational Sporting Seasons

Game animals may be taken during their specified [hunting](#) or [trapping](#) seasons with the appropriate recreational [sporting license](#).

Relocating an Animal

It is illegal for you to move or relocate an animal off your property. You cannot live trap an animal and release it in a park, on State land or anywhere other than on the property where it was captured. If you need a wild animal removed from your property, [contact a Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator](#) (NWCO). Relocating an animal can create problems for neighbors, can move diseases like rabies or Lyme, and can cause unnecessary stress to the animal. This task must be handled by a licensed professional.

Use the Tables Below to Identify if You Need a Permit

- For a DEC Permit** - Contact a regional [DEC Wildlife Office](#). DEC may deny a permit if the nuisance, destruction of property, or threat to public health and welfare will not be effectively abated by taking the animal.
- For a Federal Permit** - Contact the [US Fish Wildlife Service Migratory Bird Program](#) (leaves DEC website) at 413-253-8643 or by email: permitsR5MB@fws.gov.

Mammals Commonly Causing Conflicts (in alphabetical order) See Definition of "Nuisance" and "Damaging"

Animal	Take if a Nuisance	Take if Damaging Property	Take if Threatening Public Safety
Bats	Please contact a DEC Wildlife Office or a NWCO when dealing with bats. Some bat species are protected and require experts to identify them. For some helpful tips on safely removing a bat from your home, visit the little brown bat webpage		
Beaver (More information on handling beaver conflicts)	DEC permit needed - refer to note 3	DEC permit needed - refer to note 3	n/a
Black Bear (More information on handling bear conflicts)	DEC permit needed	If destroying livestock or an apiary, no permit is necessary to take a black bear; however, you must promptly notify the nearest Environmental Conservation Officer (ECO) to make arrangements for delivering the carcass (find an ECO near you). Also, DEC may issue a permit for a landowner to take if there is proof that the bear is causing property damage	DEC may issue a permit for a landowner to take if there is proof that the bear is threatening public welfare or safety.
Bobcat	DEC permit needed	DEC permit needed	n/a
Chipmunk	Yes	Yes	n/a
Coyote	DEC	Yes	DEC may issue a

(More information on handling coyote conflicts)	DEC permit needed		landowner to take if there is proof that the coyote is threatening public welfare or safety
Deer	DEC permit needed	DEC permit needed	n/a
Eurasian Boar (More information on handling wild hog conflicts)	Please contact a local DEC Wildlife Office		
Fisher	DEC permit needed	DEC permit needed	n/a
Foxes - Red Fox and Gray Fox	DEC permit needed	Yes	n/a
Hare - Snowshoe/Varying	DEC permit needed	Yes, refer to notes 1 and 2	n/a
Marten	DEC permit needed	DEC permit needed	n/a
Mice	Yes	Yes	n/a
Mink	DEC permit needed	DEC permit needed	n/a
Moles	Yes	Yes	n/a
Muskrat	Yes, refer to note 2	Yes, refer to note 2	n/a
Opossum	DEC permit needed	Yes, refer to note 2	n/a
Otter, River	DEC permit needed	DEC permit needed	n/a
Porcupine	Yes	Yes	n/a
Rabbit - Cottontail	DEC permit needed	Yes, refer to notes 1 and 2	n/a
Raccoon	DEC permit needed	Yes, refer to note 2	n/a
Rats (<i>except Allegheny woodrat</i>)	Yes	Yes	n/a
Shrews	Yes	Yes	n/a
Skunk	Yes, refer to note 2	Yes, refer to note 2	n/a
Squirrels - Gray, Black, and Fox	DEC permit needed	Yes, refer to note 2	n/a
Squirrels - Red and	Yes	Yes	n/a

Flying			
Voies	Yes	Yes	n/a
Weasels	DEC permit needed	Yes, refer to note 2	n/a
Woodchuck/Groundhog	Yes	Yes	n/a

Birds Commonly Causing Conflicts (in alphabetical order) See Definition of "[Nuisance](#)" and "[Damaging](#)"

Animal	Take if Only a Nuisance	Take if Damaging Property
Blackbird, Red-winged	No	If destroying crops, may be taken without a permit during June - October, for all other damage refer to note 4
Canada Goose (More information on handling Canada goose conflicts)	Federal permit needed	Federal permit or DEC authorization needed, refer to note 5
Cormorants (More information on handling cormorant conflicts)	No	Federal permit needed
Cowbirds	No	If destroying crops, may be taken without a permit during June - October, for all other damage refer to note 4
Crow	No	If destroying crops, may be taken without a permit, for all other damage refer to note 4
Ducks	Federal permit needed	Federal permit needed
European starling	Yes	Yes
Grackle	No	If destroying crops, may be taken without a permit during June - October, for all other damage refer to note 4
Great Blue Heron	Federal permit Needed	Federal permit Needed
Gulls (More information on handling gull conflicts)	Federal permit needed	Federal permit needed
House (English) sparrow	Yes	Yes
Pigeon without leg band	Yes	Yes
Pigeon with leg band	No	No
Snow goose	Federal permit needed	Federal permit needed
Mute swans	DEC permit needed	DEC permit needed
Turkey	DEC permit needed	DEC permit needed
Woodpecker	Federal permit needed	Federal permit needed

Reptiles Commonly Causing Conflicts (in alphabetical order) See Definition of "[Nuisance](#)" and "[Damaging](#)"

Animal	Take Anytime	Take if Only a Nuisance	Take if Damaging Property	Take Under Special Circumstances
Snakes	No	DEC permit needed	DEC permit needed	Contact a local DEC Wildlife Office
Turtles	No	DEC permit needed	DEC permit needed	Contact a local DEC Wildlife Office

Notes

The following notes apply to specific areas in the tables above:

- **Note 1** - May not use ferrets, fitch-ferrets, or fitch to take
- **Note 2** - If taking during the closed hunting or trapping season, the animal must be buried or cremated immediately
- **Note 3** - Contact your nearest [Regional Wildlife Office](#). Permits to remove beaver can only be issued to the landowner of the property on which the beaver control activities will take place. Permits to remove beaver dams can be issued to anyone but do not authorize trespass and require permission from the landowner on which the dam is located. Depending on the location, you may be required to obtain other permits as well. Wildlife staff will advise you on what additional permits, if any, are necessary. When contacting the Department, you will need to provide your name, address, phone number(s), e-mail address (if available), and the location of the beaver problem(s).
- **Note 4** - Blackbirds, cowbirds, crows, and grackles may be taken when they cause serious injuries to agricultural or horticultural crops, when they cause a health hazard or structural damage, or to protect state or federally threatened or endangered species. Each calendar year, the person experiencing damage must attempt to control these species using nonlethal methods such as netting and flagging or other deterrents. For more information, please visit the United States Fish and Wildlife Service electronic [Code of Federal Regulations](#) (leaves DEC website).
- **Note 5** - Under certain circumstances, property owners are allowed to remove Canada geese during specific time periods. Please contact your nearest [Regional Wildlife Office](#) or visit the [Nuisance Canada geese](#) page for more information.

"Nuisance" or "Damaging"

- **Nuisance Wildlife** - A **wild animal** that may cause property damage, is perceived as a threat to human health or safety, or is persistent and perceived as an annoyance. Examples include a skunk or fox living under the porch or shed. If an animal is not causing any concern, for example, it is simply passing by, is observed only once or twice and does not cause any harm, then it should not be considered a nuisance.
- **Damaging Wildlife** - A **wild animal** that **damages property**, for example, digs up your yard, eats your landscape plants or vegetable garden, kills or threatens your livestock or pets, fouls your lawn, eats the fish in your pond, damages your home, etc.

If you are unsure of whether an animal is a "nuisance" or "damaging" in any circumstance, please contact your local [DEC Wildlife Office](#)

Additional Resources

Visit DEC's main [Nuisance Species](#) webpage with information and links to multiple helpful resources.

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